“The Female Abortionist.” National Police Gazette 9, no. 27 (March 13, 1847).

Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:30 – 11:45 AM
Spring 2021

Instructor: Brooke Lansing
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Office hours: by appointment online

This syllabus is subject to change at instructor’s discretion.
Course Overview

This course offers a history of reproductive politics in the United States from the colonial era through the present. “Reproductive politics” are considered through two broad lenses: people’s everyday practices regarding fertility and family formation, and how social, political, and religious authorities regulate reproduction. We will examine these topics in primary and secondary sources that take us through a survey of American history, paying attention to the impact of gender, class, and race on the possibilities and limitations of reproduction. Questions that will be considered in this course include: Who is allowed to reproduce, and who is allowed to constitute family? How does reproductive control carry different meanings across centuries, or even decades? How do historians discern those meanings for different actors? How is reproductive control related not only to gender, but also to race and class in the United States?

Note that this course covers a number of topics of a sensitive nature, including violence, emotional strain, and graphic descriptions of bodily or medical situations. Students are welcome to discuss any concerns with the instructor in advance.

Course Goals

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand how reproduction is a socially, culturally, and politically contingent process
- Gain knowledge of women’s and gender history
- Interpret and develop arguments about primary sources in writing and speech
- Identify arguments in and evaluate secondary sources
- Think and write critically about current events using historical analysis

Course Requirements

The course is organized into two discussion-based seminar per week, with short lectures at the instructor’s discretion. Doing well in this course requires closely reading the assigned material, participating in discussion, and completing writing assignments.

You will need an Internet-enabled device by which you can log on to class sessions via Zoom. You are strongly encouraged to keep your camera on during class, but the instructor understands these are difficult times and that is not always possible.

Grading:

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- Response Posts & Papers: 15%
- Midterm Paper: 10%
- Midterm Presentation: 10%
- Annotated Bibliography: 15%
- Final Presentation: 10%
- Final Paper: 20%
**Blackboard**
The Blackboard website has the syllabus and a link to the reserve readings. To access the website, go to: http://blackboard.jhu.edu. Login using your JHED ID and select the course.

You will also upload your written assignments to Blackboard (see below).

**Readings**
You will find a link to course readings on EReserves on the library’s website at https://www.library.jhu.edu/library-services/course-readings/. They are also linked via Blackboard. Please be advised that the total number of weekly pages may not be evenly divided between sessions.

**Weekly Writing Assignments**

*Pre-class Blackboard posts:* Post a short response (100-250 words) to the readings by 11:59 PM the night before the seminar occurs (by 11:59 PM on Monday night for Tuesday’s session; 11:59 PM on Wednesday night before Thursday’s session). Do this every week except the weeks for which you choose or are required to write long reading response papers.

There is an extra, mandatory discussion thread between Week 3 and 4 for which you are required to write a short response to one Zoom session for the Critical Conversations on Reproductive Health/Care Conference.

*Long reading response papers:* pick four weeks during the semester prior to Week 9 for which you will upload a response paper of 300-500 words to Blackboard by 7:00 PM on Monday night (i.e., before Tuesday’s seminar has occurred). In addition to the three of your choice, a response paper for Week 10 is mandatory. You do not have to post pre-class Blackboard posts during the weeks you write a long reading response paper.

An effective response paper will not simply summarize the readings, but show critical thinking about them. Use response papers as opportunities to exercise your skills as a historian: you might discuss an author’s claim that you agree or disagree with; discuss how and why authors contradict or otherwise relate to one another; or put a primary source in conversation with a secondary source. You might also take the time to reflect on something that surprised or evoked emotion in you. These papers are important as opportunities for the instructor to provide substantive feedback on your writing and historical analysis.

*Missed post policy:* you may miss two pre-class Blackboard posts, no questions asked, during the semester. If you complete all 22, the two lowest scores will be dropped. 20 posts will be graded per student.

**Midterm Writing and Presentation Assignment**
Write a five-page analysis of a primary source of your choosing that is relevant to the themes of the course. Upload to Blackboard prior to the start of class in **Week 5**. You will then present on the primary source and your analysis for five to seven minutes during Week 5’s class time, with five minutes allotted for questions from your peers.

We will discuss how to find a relevant source in class. Suggested databases for finding primary sources are:

- 19th Century Index
- Chronicling America: America’s Historical Newspapers
- Gerritsen Collection--Women's History Online, 1543-1945
- North American Women’s Letters and Diaries: Colonial to 1950

Databases are accessible via Sheridan Libraries at: [http://databases.library.jhu.edu/databases/subject/history](http://databases.library.jhu.edu/databases/subject/history).

**Final Project**

**Part 1: Annotated Bibliography**
In lieu of a response paper for **Week 11**, you will upload to Blackboard by the start of Thursday’s class an annotated bibliography of sources that you will use for the final project.

**Part 2: Research Paper**
Issues of reproductive control remain a pressing part of modern American culture and politics. Given your expertise in the subject after taking this course, legislators have chosen you to advise them on creation of policy related to reproduction, contraception, and family formation. Select a modern issue on which to write a 10-15 page brief, explaining the topic and its relevant historical background.

Possible topics include:

- Overturning *Roe v. Wade*
- Parental consent for obtaining abortion or contraception
- Patenting mail-order contraception or the availability of over-the-counter contraception
- Federal policy including funding for the abortion (or the “gag rule”)
- Employer provisions for birth control (such as *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*)

**Part 3: Presentation**
You will present your brief to the class during time allotted for the **final exam** (date TBA).

**Example reading for final project:**
**Academic Tools**
For an explanation of how to analyze a primary source, please watch the following video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dVr-SAe2vU&t=17s
*(Additional resources on analyzing primary sources will be distributed throughout the semester.)*

A useful video on writing technique may be found here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJrBr5VyQY0&t=10s

You can find further writing assistance at the Writing Center, located in the north wing of the Hutzler Reading Room (Gilman Hall 230). For more information, and to make an appointment, please visit their website: https://krieger.jhu.edu/writingcenter/.

**Disability Services**
If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services at studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu or 410-516-4720. Please do so promptly; requests for extended time or other accommodations must be made well in advance of exams or due dates for assignments.

**Academic Ethics**
Doing history is a social process. We rely upon other scholars for finding sources, translating them, and offering us fresh interpretations based upon them. Therefore it is very important to credit others for such work, usually by means of footnotes or other forms of citation. Please see the helpful guide to citation practices on the library’s research help website: [http://library.jhu.edu/researchhelp/](http://library.jhu.edu/researchhelp/), and if you have any questions, please raise them with me. It is also important to listen respectfully to the views of others; history is a conversation, and everyone is entitled to their own point of view, provided they can offer evidence for it. When you disagree with another student’s interpretation, say so courteously and explain why you see it differently.

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, re-use of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student affairs and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” and the Ethics Board Web site ([http://www.jhu.edu/design/oliver/academic_manual/ethics.html](http://www.jhu.edu/design/oliver/academic_manual/ethics.html)) for more information.

*Thanks to Dr. Mary Fissell for this explanation of Academic Ethics.*
Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction and Colonial America

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

Thursday: January 28, 2021
- Rebekah Chamblit, “The Declaration, Dying Warning and Advice of Rebekah Chamblit. A Young Woman Aged near Twenty-Seven Years, Executed at Boston September 27th. 1733. according to the Sentence Pass’d upon Her at the Superiour Court Holden There for the County of Suffolk, in August Last, Being Then Found Guilty of Felony, in Concealing the Birth of Her Spurious Male Infant, of Which She Was Delivered When Alone the Eighth Day of May Last, and Was Afterwards Found Dead, as Will More Fully Appear by the Following Declaration, Which Was Carefully Taken from Her Own Mouth.,” Samuel Kneeland and Thomas Green, 1733. (version available on E-Reserves and in Course Content on Blackboard)

Week 2: Reproduction and Regulation in Early America

Tuesday, February 2, 2021

Thursday, February 4, 2021
  o Recommended: Accompanying website: https://history.uconn.edu/taking-the-trade-timeline/

**February 4-7: Critical Conversations on Reproductive Health/Care Conference**
- Attend one Zoom session for Critical Conversations on Reproductive Health/Care Conference between February 4-7. Write a short response (less than 200 words) to the session on the separate Blackboard discussion group.

**Week 3: Race and the Refraction of Freedom**

**Tuesday, February 9, 2021:**

**Thursday, February 11, 2021**

**Week 4: Urban Possibilities**

**Tuesday, February 16, 2021**

**Thursday, February 18, 2021**

**Week 5: Midterm Primary Source Presentations**

*No Blackboard posts or long reading response papers due.*

**Tuesday, February 23, 2021**

- Primary source analysis due by email and in hard copy to instructor at the beginning of the seminar. Seminar time will be used for student presentations, including Q&A, on their selected primary source. See “Writing Assignments” section of syllabus for details.

**Thursday, February 25, 2021**

- Continued primary source presentations

**Week 6: Physicians and Female Virtue**

**Tuesday, March 2, 2021**

- Selected advertisements from Mrs. Bird and Madame Restell. (see Blackboard)
- “Trial of Madame Restell, Alias Ann Lohman, for Abortion and Causing the Death of Mrs. Purdy; Being a Full Account of All the Proceedings on the Trial, Together With the Suppressed Evidence and Editorial Remarks.” (For Sale at the Book Stand in Wall St., Adjoining the Custom House; at the Cottage No. 312 Broadway, Next to Masonic Hall; at the News Office, Corner of Duane and Greenwich St.; Corner of Nassau and Beekman Sts., and Bowery News Office, 1841).

**Thursday, March 4, 2021**

- Storer, Horatio Robinson. Why Not?: A Book for Every Woman. Lee and Shepard, 1866, Sections 1, 2, 4, and 6.

**Week 7: Late Nineteenth-Century Ideals and Practice**

**Tuesday, March 9, 2021:**


• “The People vs. Charles Manches.” New York Court of Oyer and Terminer, March 14, 1872. Obscenity Trials Collection. Schlesinger Library. (in Blackboard Course Content)

Thursday, March 11, 2021:


Week 8: “Birth Control”

Tuesday, March 16, 2021


Thursday, March 18, 2021


Week 9: Better Babies and Barren Mothers

Reminder: this is the last week by which you have to complete your four long reading responses of choice.
Tuesday, March 30, 2021


Thursday, April 1, 2021


Week 10: Case Study: Baltimore and Dr. Rhetta

*Reminder: long response paper is mandatory this week. Pre-class Blackboard posts are not mandatory.*

Tuesday, April 6, 2021

- Find readings under “Baltimore Rhetta” folder on Blackboard. They are instructed to read all primary sources in the Dropbox, and use their response papers to think like a historian: what is happening according to these primary sources? Consider the following questions: Who is Dr. Rhetta, and why did he attract so much public attention? How did race configure in his career, or in Baltimore at large? What are the limitations of the sources, and what further questions do they suggest? **This response paper is mandatory.**

Thursday, April 8, 2021

Week 11: Mid-Twentieth Century Crackdowns

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

Thursday, April 15, 2021
• Assignment due: Turn in annotated bibliography of eight to ten sources that you will use for the final project.
• In lieu of class, stream: Kirtz, Kate, and Nell Lundy. Jane: An Abortion Service, 1996. (available through JHU Libraries)

Week 12: Roe v. Wade and Retaliation

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

Thursday, April 22, 2021
• Primary sources TBD

Week 13: Pro-Choice, Pro-Life, or Reproductive Justice?

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

Thursday, April 29, 2021